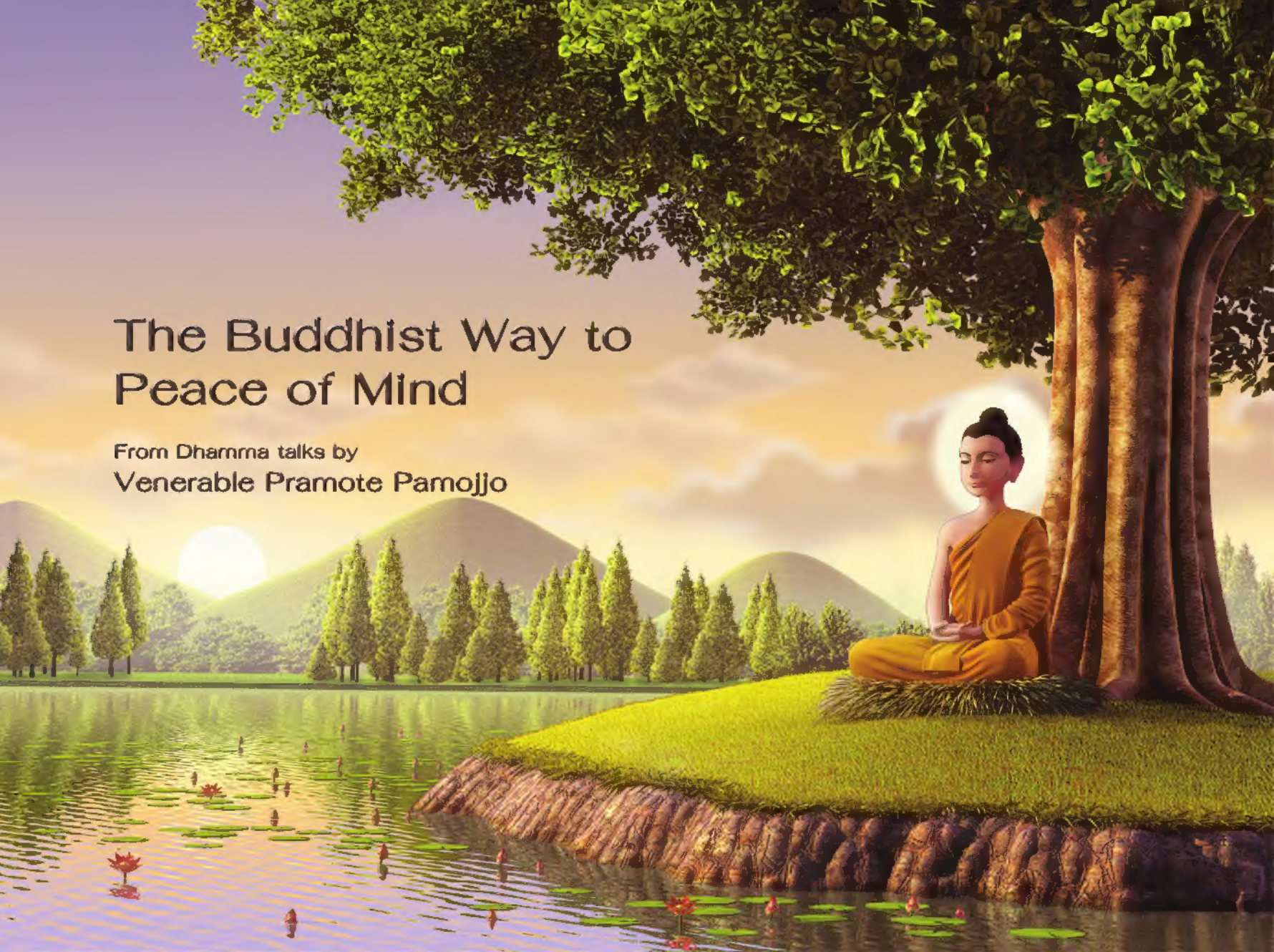


The Buddhist Way to Peace of Mind

From Dhamma talks by
Venerable Pramote Pamojjo



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ISBN 978-616-335-470-9





Becoming a separate and unbiased observer,
we come to see the body and mind as they really are.
This is the essence of Vipassana meditation.

Foreword

Venerable Pramote Pamojjo is a monk and meditation master in the Thai forest tradition who has a way of making the Buddha's teachings on enlightenment easy to understand and to put into practice. The result is a revived interest in meditation and Dhamma practice in Thailand, primarily amongst young and modern people seeking a more profound happiness and understanding of the truth. When putting the teachings to practice many are finding drastic changes for the better in their lives. The movement has now spread abroad by way of translations of Venerable Pramote's books and talks.

This book is a compilation from ten of Venerable Pramote's Dhamma talks in the summer of 2008. Only materials concerning the principles of meditation and Dhamma practice are presented here, along with pictures for easy understanding. We hope that such visual aids will be a vehicle to help further spread the Buddha's teachings that end our suffering. We thank Venerable Pramote for his loving-kindness and infinite compassion in his teachings, for giving his permission for this project, and never asking anything in return except for our open hearts to listen and our diligence in our own practice.

In the making of this book, any errors are the responsibility of the compiler, translator and editors only.

The Production Team

March 25, 2013

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Chapter One: A Golden Opportunity

We are very fortunate to be alive in a time where the genuine teachings of the Buddha are still available.

And we are an exemplary few who take a sincere interest in studying them.

This is a special and rare opportunity.



What a wonderful opportunity we have to be born human beings who can learn the Buddha's teachings.

The teachings of the Buddha are crystal clear and the truth
of them is verifiable in one's own experience.
When we practice the Buddha's teachings (the Dhamma),
we will see obvious and quick results.
Upon understanding the Dhamma,
many of the Buddha's disciples exclaimed,
"It is crystal clear, as if something that was turned upside down,
is now right-side up." It is easy.
We turn something up that was facedown.
How hard could this be?



"My Lord, your teachings are so clear it is like setting things straight that were upside down; opening that which was closed; pointing the way to one who is lost; or setting lanterns along a dark path in the hopes that those who have good sight can find their way." - A disciple of the Buddha

The Buddha's Teachings are so valuable

In the beginning – as they point us in the right direction.

In the middle – as they make perfect sense, showing us what is right, what is wrong, and we can verify the truth for ourselves.

In the end – as we truly wash away the impurities in our hearts and minds, and suffering disappears, step by step.



The Buddha's teachings are extraordinary, as they are accessible to those of all walks of life

Buddhism teaches us to study ourself. And what do we consider to be our self? Our body and our mind, of course, are what we call our self. So we need to study our body and our mind.

The Buddha taught that we will suffer as a result of love. Anything we love, will be the cause of our suffering. The things that we love the most are this body and mind of ours. Why do we love them? Because we think these things can bring us happiness. For example, we love our eyes. We don't want to go blind. We want to see beautiful things. If our eyes could see only ugly and scary things, we wouldn't want to have eyes. Similarly, our ears let us hear nice sounds. If we could but hear

only sounds we didn't want to hear, then we wouldn't want to have ears.

Our sense organs – through which we see, hear, smell, taste and touch – allow us to experience the outside world. They make us believe the world is valuable, that it can bring us happiness. When the world brings us pains and sorrows, we still keep dreaming up things to hope for. We are filled with hopes of permanent happiness, hopes of our situation being permanently good and our minds at peace. The truth is that all things are temporary. Since we wish for the impossible to occur, we inevitably suffer. Our wishes can never come true.

When we start to examine this body and this mind, we will see that they are suffering, that they are nothing special at all. When we see this truth clearly, we will let go of all attachment to the body and mind. And once we are no longer attached to the mind,



There is nothing we love more than our self, the body and the mind.
We attach to the body and mind because we don't see the truth that they are suffering.

THE SECOND TRUTH

The goal of Buddhism is to be free from personal suffering. This is called enlightenment or Nirvana. There is no more suffering when we are no longer attached to the body and to the mind because the body and mind are what suffer.

There are four stages of enlightenment :

Stage #1 – The first objective is to become a stream enterer (sotapanna). The stream enterer has eliminated the wrong view that there is a self, that the body and mind are a person or have some entity in them we can call 'me'. He or she has reached full fruition in morality, and has established a small amount of concentration and wisdom.

Stage #3 – Non-Returner (anagami). The non-returner has released all attachment to body. He or she has no more aversion and no more desire that results from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. He or she has reached full fruition in morality and concentration, and established an intermediate level of wisdom.

Stage #2 – Once Returner (sakitagami). The once returner has quick and automatic mindfulness that renders impurities of mind weak and powerless. He or she has reached full fruition in morality, and has established an intermediate level of concentration and a small amount of wisdom.

Stage #4 – The fourth and final objective is to become an arahant. The arahant is fully enlightened, released from impurities and has no more attachment to even the mind. He or she has reached full fruition in morality, concentration and wisdom and is free from suffering.



There are four stages of enlightenment on this path. The arahant, a fully enlightened one, has reached the destination

Essentially, Buddhism is about right view; clearly seeing, correctly understanding the phenomena that arise in the body and mind. Clearly seeing the truth of all phenomena, the mind releases attachment to them. This is seeing, with crystal clarity, The Four Noble Truths : the truths of suffering, its cause, its end and the path leading to its end.

Suffering is the Truth of body and mind. Our duty with respect to suffering is to observe it. When we fully understand suffering and see the truth of body and mind with crystal clarity, we abandon the cause of suffering, desire. In that moment, we know the end of suffering as the path to its end emerges. If we can see and fully accept the Truth, we will suffer no more.

The Four Noble Truths are the most profound and important teachings. If we don't see suffering with crystal clarity, then we will struggle endlessly in the cycle of birth and death.



The all-encompassing cycle of suffering birth, aging, sickness and death.

Those who have attained enlightenment dwell in the Noble Truths. They see the truth of life, the truth of the world, the truth of the universe.

The Duty of Buddhists is to study the Dhamma until we see the truth and dwell in it as the enlightened ones do.



The Buddhist way is that of listening, reading, contemplation and practicing to see the truth of what we have learned.

The first of the Noble Truths is called suffering. Suffering refers to body and to mind. Can we see that it is the body and mind that are suffering? No, we can't see that yet. We still think that the body is suffering sometimes but happy at other times; and that the mind is suffering at times, but happy at other times.

If we still see that the body and mind are only suffering sometimes and are happy at other times, then we will not let go of attachment to them. We will still think there is a chance to make them happy. We will still love and cherish them, so we keep struggling to make them content and comfortable.

When we don't see the Dhamma, when our heart still doesn't understand the Four Noble Truths and doesn't see that the body and mind are suffering, then we will not be able to let go of attachment to the body and mind. We still love and cherish them.



Birth. Aging Sickness Death. Losing what we love and not getting what we want.
Such is the suffering of the human experience In short, body and mind are suffering itself.

When we love and cherish the body and mind, then the cause of suffering occurs. The cause of suffering is desire - wanting and craving. What do we want? We want this body and this mind to be happy. And we want them to be free from suffering.

The body and mind are already suffering in and of themselves. This is hard to see. But when desire arises to make this mind and body happy or free from suffering, we can see that suffering occurs.

Whenever there is wanting, the mind is not peaceful. It struggles. And whenever there is struggle, there is suffering. The body and mind are suffering already, and when wanting occurs, an extra load of suffering is added to the mix!

The Cause of Suffering



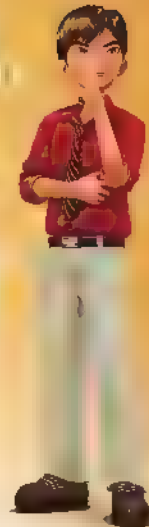
Desire for this state to remain.



Desire for this state to pass.



Desire for this state to arrive



The struggle to get, to keep and to end things allows suffering to continue endlessly.
Desire, therefore, is the cause of suffering.

When we don't understand the truth of suffering, the cause of suffering is sure to arise. When desire arises, there is a struggle to get some other state than the present state. A false reality is fabricated (an idea that something else is better), and this is created by the mind. The end of suffering will not be experienced.

The end of suffering is Nirvana. Nirvana is the unconditioned state, where the mind is free from all fabrication, desire and craving. The mind that attains Nirvana is truly and completely at peace.

The End of Suffering



When we see suffering with crystal clarity, we will not attach to it anymore
All desire will disappear on its own and we will reach the end of suffering.

When the truth of suffering is fully understood in one's heart and one's own experience, the cause of suffering, desire, is abandoned automatically right in that moment. Nirvana, the end of suffering is experienced automatically right in that moment. The Noble Path to the end of suffering reaches fruition automatically in that same moment.

The Buddha taught that we should clearly understand the Four Noble Truths, and he also taught us the way to understand them. We are to observe and know suffering. The body and mind are what the Buddha refers to as suffering. We are to know body and mind until we see that they are suffering. When we see this with crystal clarity, the cause of suffering will be abandoned; the end of suffering will be realized and the Noble Path to the end of suffering will have reached fruition. It will all happen on its own and all in one instant.



The Noble Path is the direction we take to reach the end of suffering
There are three areas of training for a total of eight things to develop.

The way to know suffering that the Buddha taught is called the practice of Vipassana

It is to know in a very special way the Three Characteristics of the body and the mind.

The Three Characteristics are that nothing is permanent (anicca), that nothing persists (dukkha or unsatisfactoriness) and that nothing can be controlled (anatta or non-self).



We practice Vipassana in order to see the Three Characteristics of body and mind.



Chapter Two: The Buddha's Teachings

The Buddha taught that there are three areas that we must train in.

The first area of training is in morality :

What do we do in order for our mind to be in its normal state, where it is not being influenced by a harsh impurity like greed, anger or ignorance to the point of speaking or acting immorally?

When we experience the world through our eyes and ears, we need to have mindfulness; an awareness of what is going on in our hearts. If we can see the greed, anger or ignorance, then, with practice, it cannot take over our mind and cause us to be immoral.



Training in morality is about freeing our heart and mind from the harsher impurities of mind that can take over and cause us to speak or act harmfully.

An example is if we are in a committed relationship and we see a beautiful woman at the park. We feel that we like and desire her. Mindfulness can then see that craving has arisen in the heart. If there has been enough practice and the mindfulness is genuine, the craving will then disappear. We then will not deceive her or our partner in any way.

We may see that she has a partner and feel angry or jealous and want to say or do something to hurt him. If mindfulness sees the anger, the anger can not manipulate the mind. It will disappear and no harm will be done.

It is wonderful to have mindfulness that is able to keep us moral. But if our mindfulness is not yet strong enough to do all the work in keeping us from doing harm by itself, we still need to keep a proper moral standard, a set of rules to live by: we must be sure to not kill or harm any living being, to not steal, cheat, lie or take alcohol or drugs for intoxication. And once we live a moral life, our meditation will benefit as well.

3. Refraining
from over-indulgence in sense pleasure,
especially sexual deviance.

2. Refraining
from stealing.

1. Refraining
from killing
any living being.



4. Refraining
from lying and
harmful speech.

5. Refraining
from taking alcohol,
drugs or any substance
for intoxication.

**The five moral
precepts.**

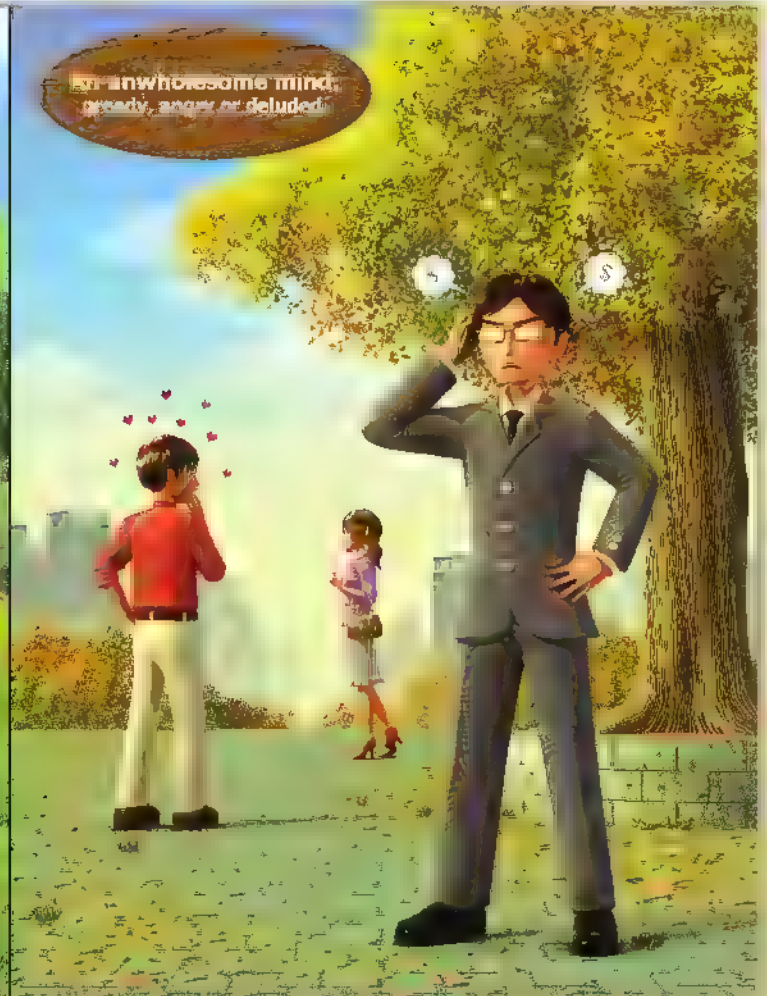
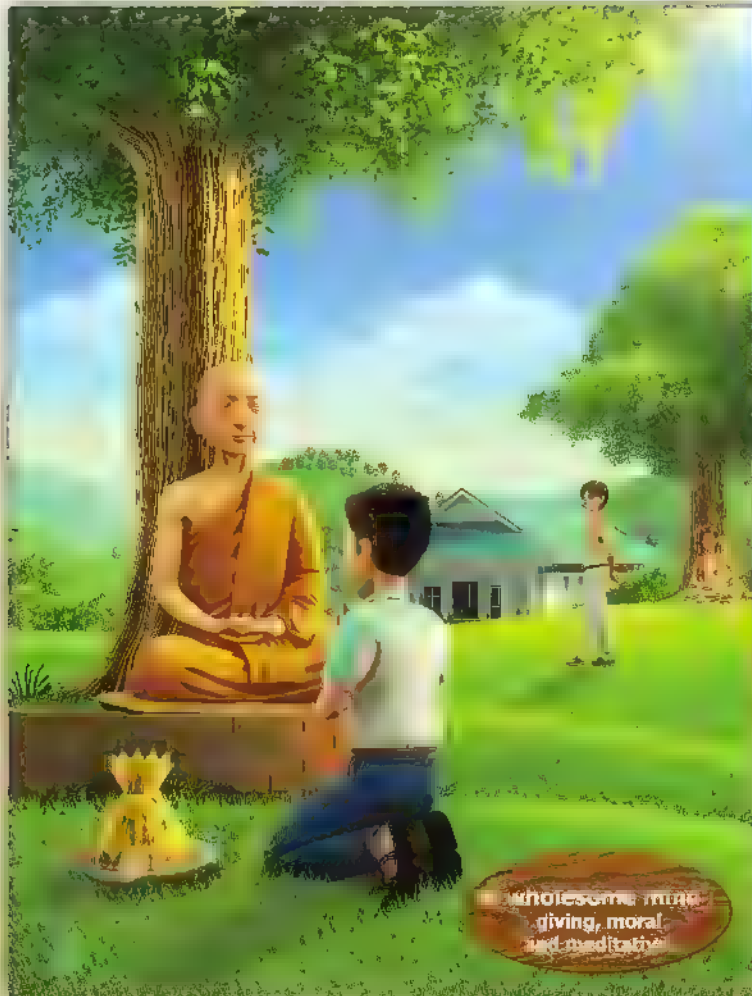
Having mindfulness, we will recognize the negative emotions that arise within,
and they cannot manipulate us into breaking our moral precepts.

The second area of training is mind – mental training.

We learn to identify skillful and wholesome states of mind and unskillful and unwholesome ones.

There are many types of skillful and wholesome mind states; some are appropriate for living happily in the world, some are appropriate for practicing meditation to make the mind calm and some are appropriate for practicing Vipassana to see the truth of the way things are.

When the mind is seeing things the way they truly are, it is in the most wholesome mind state. It is highly skillful and wise. We can't force this mind state to arise – it comes up all on its own when we are practicing Vipassana correctly.



When we develop mindfulness, the mind will have the ability to see wholesome and unwholesome states of mind all by itself.

We need to learn how to attain this highly skillful state of mind that practices Vipassana.

We need to learn how to make mindfulness,
which observes the body and mind, arise on its own.

Mindfulness is the recognition of a phenomenon of body or mind.
A phenomenon can be a feeling like happiness, a mental state like laziness,
or a physical movement like nodding ones head.

Mindfulness will arise on its own when it sees a phenomenon
that has been precisely memorized.



We can practice mindfulness formally in sitting and walking meditation.

How do we make mindfulness arise on its own? With practice.

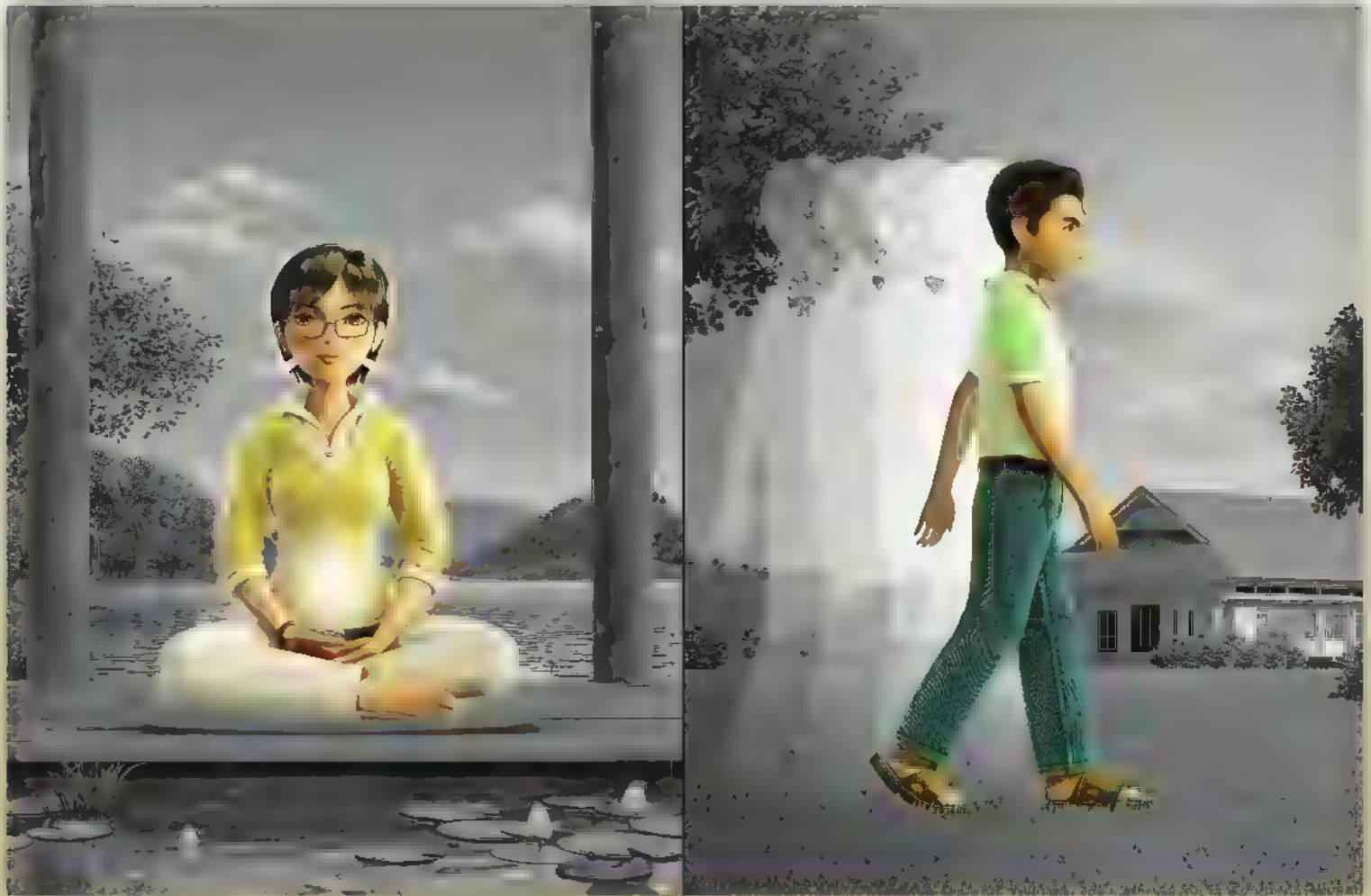
To practice being mindful of the body, simply notice when the body moves.

Be aware when you breathe in.

Be aware when you breathe out.

Be aware when the stomach expands and contracts.

Be aware when your body bends and stretches.



To practice observing physical phenomena, we can know the body is breathing in and breathing out continuously and we can watch the body moving.

To practice being mindful of the mind, learn to recognize pleasant and unpleasant feelings, and the different mental states and emotions. When there is anger, greed or when we are lost in thought, we must notice that this is so. When the mind does not have anger, is not greedy or isn't lost in thought, then we must notice that this is so. Let's keep noticing what mental states have arisen after they do. From practicing in this way, mindfulness will arise on its own eventually.

It is important that we let the body and mind do what they do naturally, and then notice after the fact what they have done. For example, we move our hands when we are talking to someone and then notice that our hands moved. Or we see food and greed arises in the heart and then we know that it has. If we get lost in thought, we then become aware that this has happened: "oh, the mind just wandered off!"



To practice observing mental phenomena, we can know there are unpleasant sensations in the body or feelings in the heart. We can also keep knowing when the mind is thinking busily.

When we practice repeatedly seeing physical
and mental phenomena as described,
the mind starts to remember the states that we see.

Eventually, our mind will have these states memorized so well,
that mindfulness will see them when they come up
without any intention or effort on our part!

Mindfulness will work on its own to see
and know the workings of the body, mind and heart.



Genuine mindfulness arises on its own when the mind precisely recollects a phenomenon.

In Vipassana, mindfulness needs to be automatic, working on its own to see the true characteristics of what physical and mental phenomena arise. If the mindfulness is intentional, then it is a practice for calmness not for seeing reality. For example, we can bring our mindfulness to the in and out-breath or to the abdomen. We can be extremely focused on the breathing without forgetting about it even for a second. Or we can walk and see every detail of the foot movement. We can even reach for a bottle of water and if our concentration is strong, we may even see the movement break up frame by frame like a cartoon sketch.

These highly focused practices are for calmness – they are called Samatha meditations and not Vipassana. If we are keeping our mindfulness and focus on an object, whatever the object may be, it is Samatha meditation. For Vipassana, we must not focus in, but instead, see the true characteristics of body and mind, or physical and mental phenomena.



We are practicing Vipassana incorrectly if we are focusing in on something, for example our abdomen or our feet.

In order to see the true characteristics of mental and physical phenomena, we need to have the correct type of concentration where the mind is the stable observer or witness of whatever arises.

There are a few different ways to achieve correct concentration – the stable observer:

1) The first way is to practice deep absorption concentration (called jhana) up to the second absorption level. The stable observer will arise automatically there. When we come out of the deep meditation, the stable observer is not lost but is sustained for up to a week. We can then observe the body and see that it is not us. The body that is sitting, standing, and moving around will easily be seen as a physical mass. The body's true characteristic of non-self will be immediately revealed. The body that moves around will appear as merely that which is known or observed, and not who or what we are.

Who believes that he or she is a chair? No one believes that he or she is a chair! This is because a chair is something that is observed. There is a distance between us and the chair. Can we see the analogy then, when we are the stable observer of the body? The body will be experienced at a distance from the mind. The body and mind will be seen as two separate things.



When the mind is completely stable, there will be an observer or knower and that which is observed or known.

When the mind is stable and the body and mind separate from each other, it will be clear that the mind is the observer and the body is being observed. The body breathes, and the mind is the observer; the body stands, walks, sits or lies down and the mind is the observer; the body moves or is still and the mind is the observer.

In Buddhism, when the truth can be seen, it is called wisdom. When the mind and body separate for us to see, there will be the wisdom that we are not the body. The body will be seen as merely a material thing, a mass of elements, and not a person. This experience is an early stage as we walk the path of wisdom.

Training in wisdom is the third area of training that the Buddha taught.

With correct concentration, we will see the impurities of the mind like anger and greed come and go, like strangers walking by as we sit on our front porch. We need not meddle with them. They just pass by and then disappear. They have nothing to do with us.



If we can achieve the stable observer, we will be able to see physical and mental phenomena, the states of body and mind, separate out distinctly from one another. We will see that they are merely things that are known by the mind.

2) The second way to achieve correct concentration is for those who are not skilled at deep meditation. If we just keep practicing mindfulness, seeing the mental and physical phenomena that arise, the stable observer can still be achieved. However, it will arise just for a moment at a time, and that is why this type of correct concentration is called momentary concentration. Sure we all want the power and longevity of the stable observer that deep meditation brings, but this is hard to do for most of us. We can achieve the same observer for shorter periods by repeatedly seeing the mind go off to think, and repeatedly seeing the mind go in to focus on a meditation object. The mind will slowly but surely separate out from the objects of observation.

This is the momentary variety of correct concentration. The mind is the stable observer just for a moment, and then slips down and sticks to the phenomena again. It is not like the long lasting stable observer achieved through deep concentration, but it can still be effective if we are diligent. If we are skilled in deep absorption (jhana) meditation then we should practice it. But if we cannot, momentary concentration is sufficient to get good results.

For example, the mind may have wandered off into thoughts about this and that. Then we awaken to the fact that the mind had just wandered off. The thinking can then be observed as something other than the mind itself – not the mind, but something that the mind can see.

Perhaps greed arises in the mind. When we have the mindfulness that is aware greed has arisen, greed will separate out from the mind. We will observe that the greed is something other than the mind itself – it is something that the mind can see.



Momentary concentration is the type where the mind is stable just a moment at a time, each time a mental or physical phenomenon is recognized. It is a type of concentration that even beginners can achieve.

At the time of the Buddha, there were many spiritual teachers. Many of them could see that the body was not us, but they couldn't see that the mind was not us either. It is much harder to see that the mind is not us, because we have been attached to it for so long. Buddha was very special and could teach people to see that they are not their minds.

If we are honest with ourselves, we can see that the body we consider to be ours changes constantly, beyond our control. The body looks totally different than it did when we were children. And it even looks very different than when we were teenagers. When we are elderly, it looks different than when we are middle-aged. We can see that the body has no stable state or fixed appearance that is ours to keep.



It is easier to see that the body is not us than to see that the mind is not us
The body feels less like a permanent fixture than the mind does.

Even though this body is changing incessantly and is never stable, we still think there is a person in this body. We think that the child from before and the person now are the same. We have a misconception that we are a particular person, or on a deeper level, that we are our mind. It is hard to see that we are not our mind. But when we finally see this in our own experience and fully accept it to be true, then we become an enlightened one at the first stage – a stream-enterer.

In order to see that the mind is not us we first need to become the stable observer and see that the body is not us, that the sensations are not us, that all the positive and negative mental states and emotions are not us but are all just things that are known and observed.

Then eventually start to notice that sometimes the mind is the stable observer, and sometimes it is just a thinker. We will notice that one moment the mind is awake and observing, and the next it is lost in thought. If we practice in this way often, we will wake up to the fact that the mind is always changing states on its own. We shouldn't intend on practicing this prematurely, however. Just let me plant the seed, and your mind will gradually notice this on its own when it is ready.



The way to see that we are not our mind is to first see that the body is not us, the feelings are not us, that all the mental states and emotions we create are not us, but are all things that are seen or observed.

At first, we learn to become aware and awake often, to achieve automatic mindfulness by noticing the movements of the body and the mind (the emotions and mental states). When the mind recognizes the physical and mental phenomena well, mindfulness will arise on its own. When mindfulness arises automatically and recognizes a phenomenon, the mind will be the stable observer for just a moment. In that moment we can sense that the body and mind are at a distance from each other. We can also notice that the comfortable and uncomfortable feelings are at a distance from the mind as well. Also the emotions like anger and greed, and the mental states like being lost in thoughts – are all at a distance from the mind itself.

Let's not think this mind is a permanent fixture either. The mind is actually arising and falling extremely quickly with each object that it is knowing. It may appear as if it is running around from one place to another, but like in a cartoon, it is really just many short instances in quick succession. The idea that the cartoon is moving is just an illusion. The mind is just like this and arises and falls at each place anew.

Actually, it is never the same mind. It's always showing up and disappearing again and again. We think that the mind of our childhood is the same mind now. We think that the mind we have now will be the same one as next year, or even the next life! However, let's not use the fact that the mind isn't us as an excuse to do bad things or to not take proper care of it! It's important to take proper care of this mind and cultivate skillful and wholesome mentalities.



The mind arises and falls in succession so quickly that it appears as if there is just one mind that is permanent, or sustained for our entire life. It works just like the illusory motion of a cartoon.

We need to keep up the practice regularly and see that the body is not us, that comfortable and uncomfortable feelings are not us and that all the different mental states are not us. Then we need to see that even the stable observer is not us; one moment it is the knower of phenomena and the next it is the thinker – it is moving and changing beyond our control and isn't any kind of permanent self. There is no such self.

One day when this truth is seen clearly in one's own experience, the mind will enter into a deep state of concentration on its own and the false understanding that there is a self will be eliminated once and for all. It is called the arising of the Noble Path. When the mind exits this deep concentration just a few moments later, it is never fooled again into believing that there is a self. There will be no shadow of a doubt about it as it will be the truth of one's experience. If the Noble Path arises, there will be no trace of a feeling of a self ever again.

He or she who sees that the body is not a self, that the mind is not a self
– that there is no self – has enlightened to the stage of the stream-enterer.

Once enlightened to this level, the stream-enterer keeps practicing in the same way that he or she did previously. He or she observes the body and mind, mental and physical phenomena and sees the truth of them until the Noble Path arises for the second time. This time, the impurities of the mind like anger and greed are substantially reduced in power and duration. The stage of the once returner is achieved.



Seeing clearly and accepting the truth that the body and mind, or physical and mental phenomena, are not us, we enter the stream of enlightenment.

The practitioner then keeps practicing and the attention starts shifting to the body. The body is seen as nothing special, nothing that can bring any permanent happiness. The body is seen as just a mass of suffering, utterly and completely. Once the mind gains the wisdom that the body is nothing but a suffering mass, it will completely release its attachment to the body. If there is no longer an attachment to the body, then neither is there an attachment to anything experienced through the senses. This means that there will be no more struggle or upset regarding things that are observed through the body's senses. The body and the outside world will no longer be a bother and cannot irritate the mind. The reason we are still attached to the body, and thus suffer as a result of it, is because we still believe that the body and its senses are things through which we can obtain pleasure and enjoyment.

Any Dhamma practitioner who is skilled at being mindful of mental phenomena can see that when the mind has desire in it, when it is attached to a phenomenon, it suffers. However, whenever the mind does not have desire and is not attached to a phenomenon, it doesn't suffer. When this fact is seen clearly, the mind will no longer attach to external phenomena and will remain the stable observer. It will not move down towards any object or phenomenon. It has the wisdom that knows that it will suffer as a result. This mind no longer attaches to the body and sense pleasures and is indifferent towards them. It no longer has sensual desire or aversion. It is the mind of a non-returner. This is another way that one can enlighten to the third stage.

For example, we have eyes and so we can see beautiful things. We have ears and so we can listen to nice sounds and words. We have a nose and so we can smell pleasant fragrances. Can we see that we love this body because we think that its senses can bring us good things? However, one day if we see that this body is nothing but suffering, we will not be enamored by sights, sounds, scents, tastes and sensations that make contact with the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and the rest of the body. We will therefore no longer have any adoration for or resistance to anything the body and outer senses experience. We will have no sense desire and no aversion. We will have reached the third stage of enlightenment called the non-returner. The mind of the non-returner is not affected positively or negatively by what the body experiences. His or her mind has let go of all attachment to the body because it has seen clearly that the body is utterly and completely a mass of suffering.



When the mind sees clearly that the body is nothing but suffering, it will no longer attach to the body, which means it will not sink into the sense organs and immerse itself in pain and pleasure from the outside world. This is the experience of a non-returned at the third stage of enlightenment.

If we have attained the non-returner stage of enlightenment, then our concentration (samadhi) will have reached full fruition. Our mind will be the stable observer all day long. We will feel as if the observer is something very special that we can depend on. It will appear as if there is no suffering when we are the observer and can only suffer if we get lost in any phenomena. The mind will stay attached to the observer like glue and not let it go, considering it to be the only worthy and happy state of mind.

One day, however, if mindfulness and wisdom are powerful enough, the stable observer will change all on its own, from what was once our salvation, to yet another state of suffering to be observed. This is something that is futile to think about. We can never understand in concepts how the observer can become a place of suffering. But when our mindfulness and wisdom have great power, they will see that this observer is a place of suffering more agonizing than any other. It is far more painful than any sadness, more than a broken heart. The more it is observed the way it is, the more painful it becomes. It is so painful, we are certain we will die. And if we don't die, then we will surely go insane. The mind must see suffering to this point in order for one to let go and become fully enlightened – an arahant. A great Buddhist master once said that for Nirvana we have to be willing to die. We must practice to the absolute limit for the mind to let go; otherwise, we will still be too stingy to achieve Nirvana.



When we profoundly realize that both body and mind are nothing but suffering, we will let go of attachment to them.
The mind will be completely free from any impurities and no longer suffer
Such is the mind of an arahant, one who has fully enlightened.



Chapter Three: Practicing Vipassana

To practice Vipassana we need to have the mindfulness that knows the body and knows the mind as they really are in the present moment. If we are to practice Vipassana correctly, we have to first learn to be aware of our body and mind. Secondly, we have to let the body and mind do what they do naturally, so that we can see them demonstrate their true Three Characteristics : that nothing is permanent (anicca), that nothing persists (dukkha) and that nothing can be controlled (anatta or non-self).

Practicing to develop mindfulness, we need to be aware and know what this mind and body are doing as often as possible. The enemy of mindfulness is mindlessness, being lost in whatever we are doing, without awareness. We can be lost in thinking or lost in what we see or hear. Another enemy of mindfulness is focusing in on the body or focusing in on the mind. This is a measure of controlling the body and mind, interfering with their natural states. When we control them, it becomes hard to see their true Three Characteristics.

When we know what our mind is doing, we will not be lost in our thoughts. We will wake up out of thought and be on the right track for Vipassana practice.

Once we are awake and out of our thoughts, our duty is to then have the correct type of concentration, the stable observer, to see what the mind and body really are and how they really are, without interfering with their behaviour. We will see their true Three Characteristics and thus be walking the path of wisdom. We will be practicing Vipassana.

Being truly awake, we are out of the make-believe world of our thoughts and dreams. We enter reality, the world of the Truth of the way things are. This is the essential access point to Vipassana.



When we begin Vipassana, we practice noticing states of body and mind as they appear in the present moment

One thing that most Dhamma practitioners are missing and need to work harder at is achieving correct concentration (samadhi). Many people practice meditation incorrectly and don't have the correct type of concentration. They can't differentiate between which type of concentration is useful and which is not. If we don't have the correct type of concentration, then we will not see the true Three Characteristics. Only correct concentration or samadhi is what gives rise to wisdom into the true nature of things.

Actually there is a form of concentration present in our minds at every single moment, even when the mind is impure or defiled with painful mental states like anger. However, having correct concentration is not an easy task. When most people try to concentrate, they move their mind down into a meditation object and hold it there. The mind is not the stable and separate observer.

Let's take a moment now and concentrate on the in and out-breath. Let's put some effort in and intend to stay with the breath. Can we see that we know what the breath is doing? That's our mindfulness. Our mindfulness is being held at the breath. And there is concentration too. But notice that the mind has slipped down and is holding to the breath. It is not the stable knower of the breath, but has moved down into it. Wisdom cannot arise this way. When most meditators watch the breath, their minds are pinned to the breath; when they watch the rising and falling of the abdomen, their minds are held at the abdomen; when they watch their feet lifting and moving during walking meditation, their minds are held down in their feet. In all these examples, the mind is lost in the sense that it is not aware it is being sent down to the meditation object. These are examples of Samatha practice where the mind is held at an object to be calm for while.

It is not the correct type of concentration that leads to wisdom. No wisdom will arise from doing Samatha, just a mind that is rendered motionless.



Concentrating on one object
wisdom does not arise

Seeing the truth
wisdom arises

Correct concentration is what gives rise to wisdom. Wisdom is seeing the true Three Characteristics of body and mind.

Our task is to try to be as aware as possible. It can help to have a home base like the breath or a mantra from which to gauge what the mind is doing. In Thailand, many people like to repeat the word “Buddho” as their mantra, which means “awakened one”. We can repeat this word and instead of forcing the mind to stay with the mantra, we watch what it does naturally. If the mind moves in and stays with the word, we know that is what happened. If the mind leaves “Buddho” and goes to think about something else, then we know that this has happened too. We observe whatever happens within. If any positive or negative feeling, or good or bad mentality arises, then we know that it has. We use a home base, a mantra in this case, in order to have a place from which to watch the mind.

When the mind is aware in this way, knowing whatever phenomenon occurs within, it will become the stable observer and wisdom can arise. We must make sure however, that the mind is comfortable, relaxed and light. It can't be stressed or heavy or under the influence of any impure mental state. It must be gentle and nimble and not harsh, stiff or stressed.

A mind that has correct concentration is light, gentle, nimble and it is certain and honest regarding everything it observes. When anger or greed arises, we know that it has. And it is seen as if it is just a person walking past our house. When the mind wanders off in thought, we are the stable observer of this again and again, as if we are seeing someone else's mind that keeps wandering off. We know happily and comfortably.



If we have a home base for the mind, like the in and out-breath or a mantra, and don't fixate on it, we will achieve correct concentration; stable, light and nimble, we clearly see the phenomena of body and mind that arise and fall.

Samadhi is stability of mind, not just concentration. If we are watching the breath, then where should the mind be stable? If we say it should be stable at the breath, then we are wrong. The mind should be stable in the knowing of the breath. There should be a distance between the breath and the mind knowing or observing. They should be two distinguishable things. Similarly, if the mind is stable in knowing, then when impurity like stress or anger arises it will appear at a distance from that which knows it has arisen. When the mind is stable and we watch the body moving, we will see it as a separate thing from the observing mind. The body and mind will appear as entirely different processes, as if there a space or distance between the two.

For those who watch the breath and send their mind out to the breath to watch it, the breath and the mind will appear as one process. There will be no space between the two. This is a practice of focusing in, of Samatha. If the mind is the stable observer it will see the body breathing as if it is at a distance, like someone else's body breathing.

When the stable observer is achieved, it witnesses the antics of the body and mind at a distance. It is a feeling of separation; not an actual separation or "out of body" experience. The mind, or consciousness does not leave the body, but is seen as something completely distinct from the body.

Sometimes the mind will move down in to the body or the breath, and sometimes it will move around elsewhere. If we are able to know when the mind moves here and there, the mind will become the stable observer again and again.



With correct concentration, the mind is stable in that it observes the breath, not stable as in holding still or fixating

When we are the stable observer and aware of the body and mind, we will see immediately that the body that moves around is not us. We will also see that the happy, unhappy and neutral feelings that we experience are not us. We will know these things are not us because they are at a distance, just like a table or a chair. No one thinks that a table is us. Can we see how this works?

When the mind is stable and there is mindfulness and wisdom, we will feel that our hand is not us but something at a distance; in fact, our entire body will feel this way. The mind is the separate observer of something that is not us, not a person.



When the mind is the stable observer, we will see that the body, the pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings, and mental and emotional states we create are all things that are observed or known. They are not a person, not us.

Most people do not have a stable mind. Their minds are moving around from thing to thing, from story to story, mindlessly and pointlessly. We can call this a restless mind. In contrast, if our mind is being held still at one object, we can call this fixating or over-focusing.

The two mistakes which inhibit our Vipassana practice are getting lost in thought and fixating or focusing.

Our mind at times can be compared to a monkey, swinging from branch to branch, this way and that way, following every thought that passes through. This is a monkey mind, aimlessly swinging from here to there without awareness, lost in whatever arises. It is busy and restless.

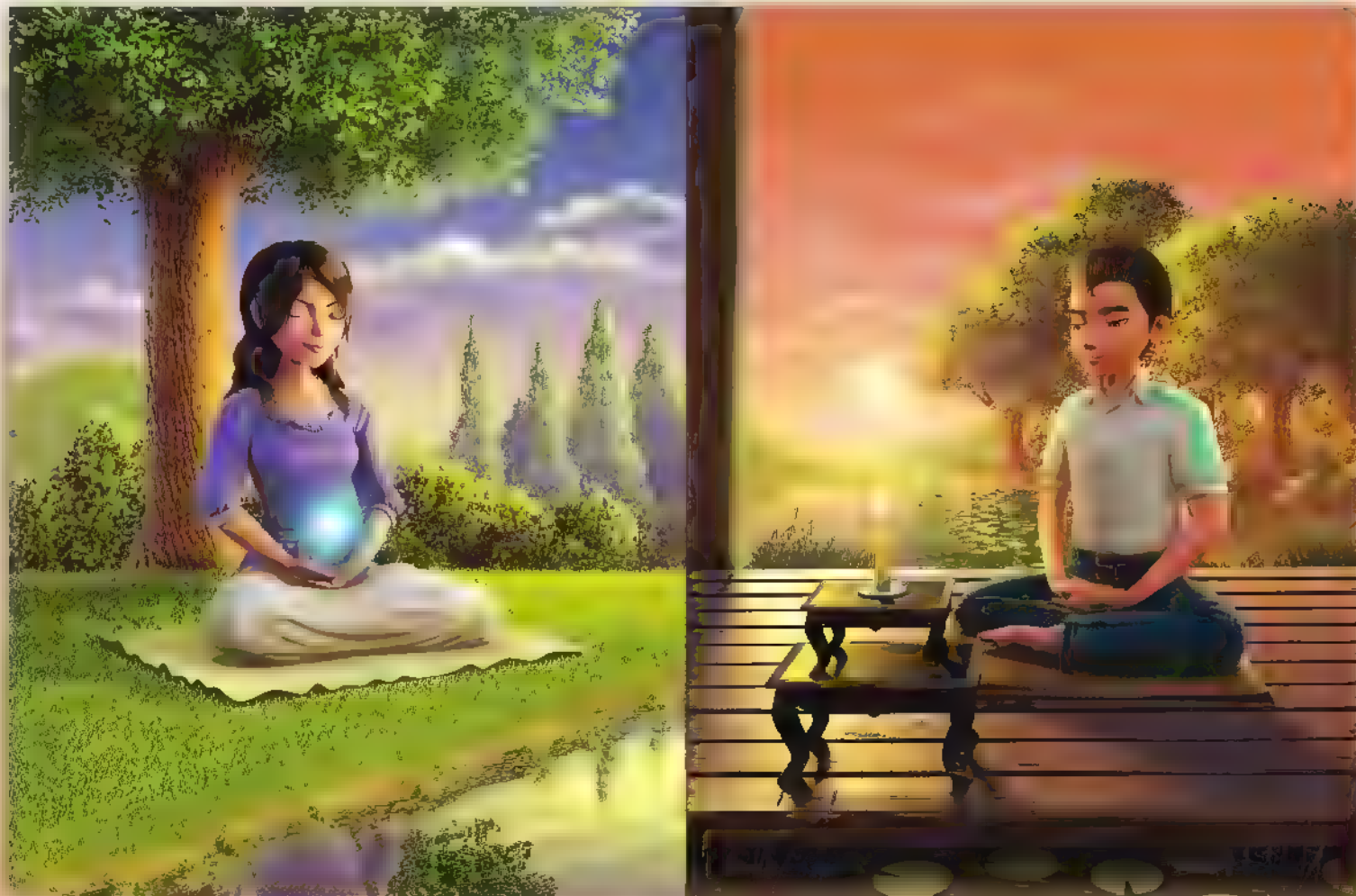
At other times, when we want the mind to behave, we move towards one particular object and stick to it. It is like Tarzan or the monkey now deciding to remain frozen, holding to one branch, not moving anywhere else. This is Samatha. This is over-focusing, where wisdom has no chance of arising.



A mind that follows thoughts and stories around without being aware that this is happening is called a restless or monkey mind. Such a mind is the opposite of a stable mind that has correct concentration.

The Buddha's famous "Middle Way" is the place where the mind is neither lost in wherever thought takes us, nor forcing the mind to be under control by holding focus or holding it still. How can we find this middle way, where we are not lost and not controlling? Firstly, if we are addicted to holding the mind still or in one place, stuck in Samatha, then we must stop our practice. Those stuck in Samatha need to recognize this is so, and then forget about meditation temporarily. They should then start to notice when the mind gets lost or moves out towards things. It may get sent out through the eyes, like when enamored by a beautiful Buddha image or a temple, or it may get lost in hearing, like listening to the mesmerizing sound of the gong. When we hear a sound, let's notice the mind go out to hear it. Notice that when we listen to the sound, we forget about our body and forget about our mind. This is because our mind is not stable, not rooted in awareness. As such, when it thinks, sees, hears, smells, tastes or touches something, it is sent out towards that thing unknowingly.

The good news is, if the mind gets lost in something and we know that it has just got lost, the mind will be stable for a moment. But if we are controlling or focusing in on something, and we come to know that we are, the mind will not become stable. It will likely still be stuck to the object it is focusing on. This is because controlling the mind to make it calm or still is actually a decent thing to do; we are in a wholesome state of mind, doing Samatha. Becoming mindful of a wholesome state of mind does not make the wholesome state disappear, unless we can see it and then willfully relax out of it. However, if we are in an unwholesome state, like in the state of mind that is busy thinking aimlessly, then the state will disappear when we become mindful of it. The mind will be stable. Mindfulness is wholesome and cannot co-exist with an unwholesome state. So every time we have mindfulness that there is a negative emotion or mental state, the state drops off immediately!

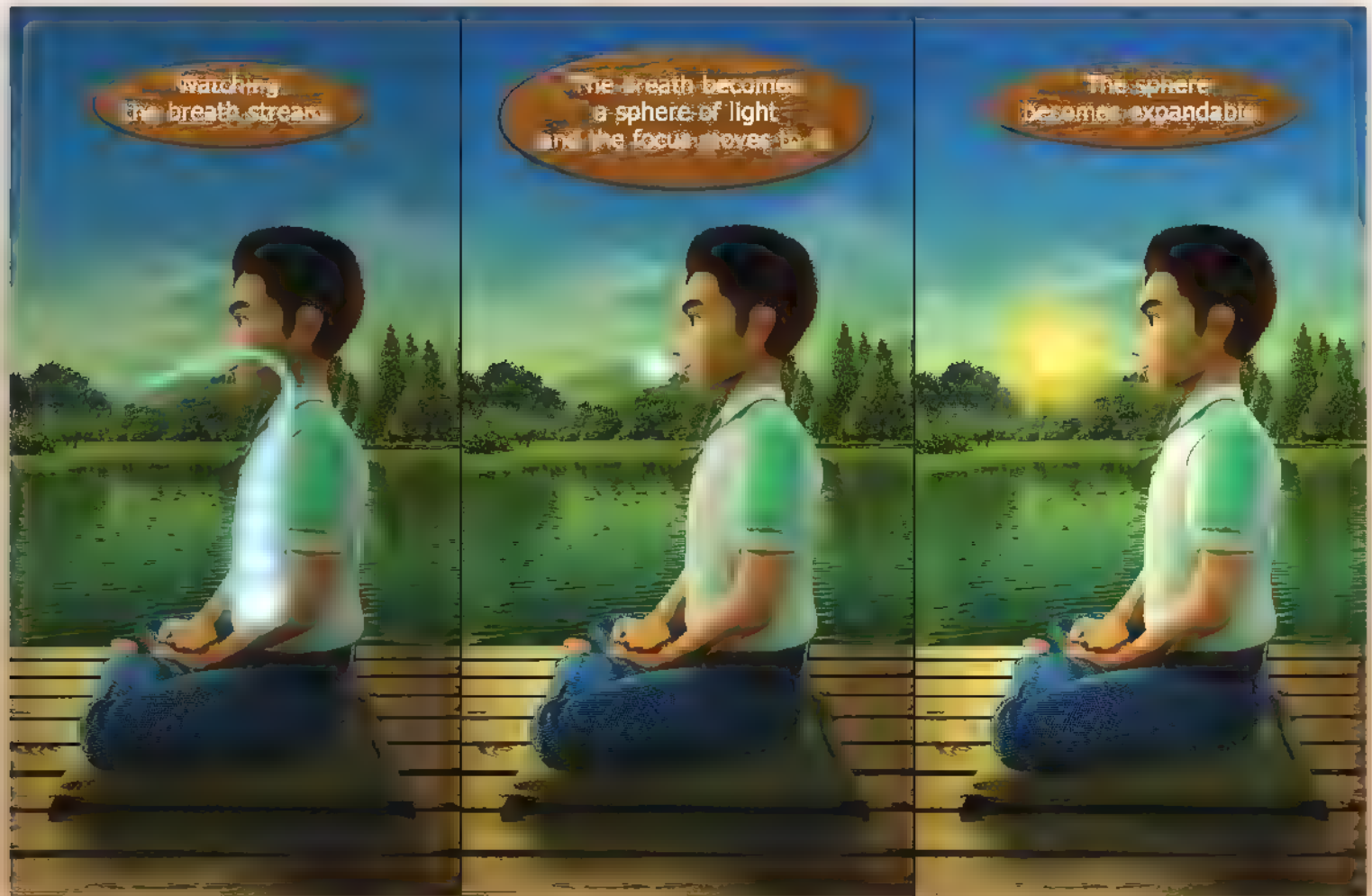


Focusing our attention at one object can help us feel calm and peaceful for a while, but will not lead to wisdom.

There are many different types of personalities and so there are also many different ways to achieve a stable mind in order to attain wisdom.

One way is to do deep absorption (jhana) meditation. For this practice, we need to watch an object like the in and out-breath. We should watch the breath in a relaxed and comfortable way. We should not squeeze, push or force the mind to try to make it still or stick to the breath; it doesn't like to be forced. Forcing it will cause stress and will never create a place of peace.

If we keep observing the breath in a relaxed way, the breath will slowly get more and more shallow. At first we breath all the way into the abdomen, but as we get more tranquil, the breath will get finer and shorter until it is just at the tip of the nostril. After that the breath will become a sphere of light seen or sensed in the mind's eye. At this point, we should switch objects and be focused on the light rather than the breath. When our concentration on the light is powerful enough, we will be able to expand and shrink the sphere of light as desired. The mind (or heart) will be very happy and filled with joy. Our job at this point is to be mindful of such feelings that arise in the mind or heart. The mind will then relax out of its focus on the light. It will no longer be contemplating it or thinking about it. All that will remain is a oneness of mind; correct Samadhi or concentration, the stable observer. No more object will be present, and no more contemplation – only the stable observer.



Watching
the breath stream

The breath becomes
a sphere of light
and the focus moves to it

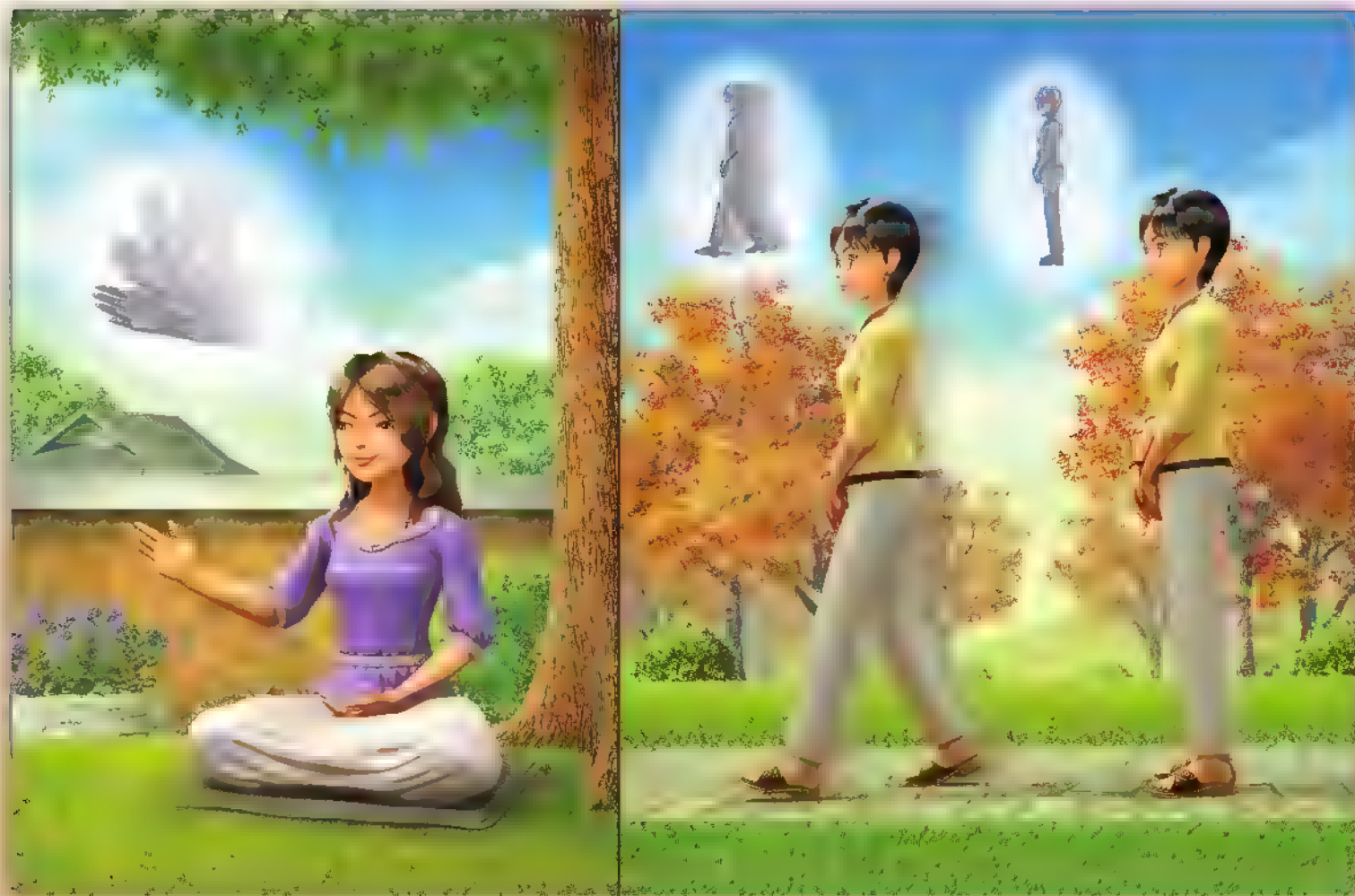
The sphere
becomes expandable

We can meditate on the breath to attain deep concentration and the stable observer.

When we exit the deep concentration and come back to the regular world, the oneness of mind, the stable observer, will still be there. It sustains itself without any effort required. The body will be experienced as merely an object of observation.

The deep meditation described is ideal, but it is very difficult for modern people, with active minds and many responsibilities.

If we would like to achieve the stable observer, there is another, easier way. We can choose an object of observation, like the breath, the abdomen rising and falling, or perhaps the body in a more general way, watching it stand, sit, walk and lie down. We can observe that the body is standing and the mind is the one that knows this. The body sits and the mind is the one that knows this. The body breaths and the mind is the one that knows this. Practicing in this way, the mind and body will separate from each other and the stable observer will be achieved, though it won't last long.



We can develop concentration through body movement.

For those of us who cannot accomplish the stable observer in either of the above ways, there is yet another way.

We can practice mindfulness in our daily life. We keep knowing when the mind moves out and gets lost and eventually, we will see the mind and the body separate from each other. Let's just try to be as aware as we can and we will have short moments where the stable observer occurs. We will learn to recognize it when it comes.

This is how it happens: Any time that we become mindful of something that is hindering our concentration, then the hindrance will drop away and what will remain is a moment of correct concentration. The hindrances to concentration are classified as sense desires (wanting to see, hear, smell, taste or touch), ill-will, restlessness and worry, laziness and sluggishness, and skeptical doubt. If we can be truly mindful of any of these states when they arise, it will fall away and be replaced by a moment of the observer. These hindrances are impurities of mind, unwholesome states and are the enemy of concentration. When mindfulness arises, any unwholesome state disappears and the mind has stable concentration for a moment.

Of all the hindrances, the restless mind that goes out to think is the most common. So it is sufficient to notice the mind going off to think over and over again and the stable observer can be achieved.



Each time mindfulness recognizes a hindrance to concentration, the mind achieves a moment of stable concentration.

When the stable observer arises, it is as if we are removed from our self;
as if a second person emerges as the watcher.

One is the watcher and the other is being watched.

The body becomes merely something that is being known or watched.

The mind becomes merely something that is being known or watched too.

Happiness, unhappiness, wholesome states like mindfulness and loving-kindness,
and unwholesome states like hatred and being lost in thought
– these are all things that are known or watched.

Anything that is being watched is not our self, right?

It is just an object of observation.

We start walking the path of wisdom when we are able to separate out
the things that we take to be our self :
in short – all aspects of the body and the mind (and heart).

Bare awareness
of objects

Consciousness

All created
mental and
emotional states

Formations

**MENTAL
PHENOMENA**

Identifying
and classifying

Memory

Pleasure and
pain of body
and mind

Feelings

**PHYSICAL
PHENOMENA**

comprised of
the earth, water,
wind and fire
elements.

**The Five
Aggregates**

There is no self. There is but a coming together of aggregates.

When we develop to the point where awareness is strong,
the things we consider to be our self will divide up into distinct objects
or aggregates for us to see.

There will be the body, feelings and sensations, memory and classification,
emotions and mental states, and the bare consciousness
that is able to know such objects.

None of these things contains or comprises a person.
But when awareness is lost and they all come together again,
we wrongly identify with these aggregates as who we are.



When our mindfulness is strong, what we thought was us will separate out into the different aggregates.

Once there is a “me”, then there becomes an “I’m old” , “I’m sick”, and “I will die.” There becomes a person whose wishes come true or whose hopes and dreams are never realized. There is a me who gets separated from the people and things that I love, and a me who has to encounter people and things that I hate. We suffer because of all this, of course. But if we can see the truth that there is no me, then there is no longer a me that gets old, gets sick and dies. There is just a body that gets old, gets sick and dies. There will never be a me that gets old, gets sick and dies ever again.

Regarding the mind, things are coming and going, changing all of the time. One moment the mind is thinking something nice, the next it is thinking something mean. One moment it is happy and the next it is upset. One moment it is angry, the next greedy, and the next it is lost in thought. It works all by itself beyond anyone’s control. Things are coming in and leaving all the time. It is not us.

This is what we do. We observe this body and see that it isn’t us. We observe this mind and see that it is not us. There is no us. There are just groupings or aggregates of phenomena. When the aggregates separate out for us to see, we see that not one of them is a person. They are but phenomena, natural processes.



If there is a "me", then there is a victim of all the painful things that happen in our life.
If there is no "me", then just the body and mind are affected not us.

If we cultivate our mindfulness more and more, we will see clearly that we are not the body, that it is just a physical mass. The mind is a distinct entity from the body and can see this truth clearly. The body will appear like a robot moving around – lying down, sitting up, getting up to stand, walking here and there. It won't be experienced as us. The happy, unhappy and neutral feelings will be seen as passers by that come and go, at a distance from the mind. They are not the mind, and they are not the body either.

When the power of our mindfulness is really excelling, we will see that the mind or consciousness arises at the eyes and then falls away; it arises at the ears and then falls away; it arises in thought, thinking occurs, and then the mind or consciousness falls away. Each mind of a wholesome state arises and falls. Each mind of an unwholesome state arises and falls. Each mind moment that is greedy, angry, lost in thought, restless or upset arises and then falls away. Life breaks up into slices. Each mind comes and goes. It is not the same mind from birth until death. That is a delusion. The mind is a different one in each moment. Why do we need to see this truth? So we can see that the mind isn't us. It is a new mind every moment. It is never the same mind. It changes from one that is aware, to a new one that is thinking, to a new one that is over-focusing, and so on. If we can see that the mind arises one at a time and then falls away, like separate mental moments, then we can see the truth of discontinuity. Our sense organs that perceive things as fluid and continuous are deceiving us and are thus fabricating a self that doesn't really exist.



The stable mind enables great wisdom to arise. It can clearly see the arising and falling of body and mind (physical and mental phenomena).

Continuity is just an illusion because things are arising and falling away so quickly. It is an illusion that blinds us from seeing what is really going on. It is just like when we watch a cartoon. It really looks like the characters are moving, but it is just a quick series of stationary sketches that make it appear continuous. There is just one drawing and then it disappears and is replaced by another drawing, and then another. We rely on our memory to make the connection between one frame and the next. We remember that the character in the previous moment in the previous position is the same character in the next, and it appears as if the same character is moving along continuously.

The mind appears to be running around from here to there, but again, this is just an illusion. A cartoon is a succession of frames arising and falling, and so are the workings of the mind. If our mindfulness and wisdom are not yet powerful enough, if we haven't practiced enough or practiced correctly, then we won't have the ability to see this truth. We will still be caught in the illusion of continuity and think the mind is a solid and permanent fixture.

If we are able to see that the mind is arising and falling away, arising and falling away over and over again, then soon, whether it be days, months or years, we will see correctly that the mind is not us; that there actually is no us. All there is, in reality, is a succession of phenomena arising and falling away. If one day we clearly see in our experience that the mind is not us, then nothing in the world will be mistaken as us ever again.



In reality, the mind arises and falls very quickly in succession.

Those who have never practiced to this point will believe that there is just one permanent mind that moves around and is conscious of different things.

The body is experienced as not us from much earlier on in our development of mindfulness. Whenever the mind is awake and aware, the body is seen as a separate thing. What is left to unveil, then, is that the mind is not us either. We will feel that it is running here and there at first, and then as our mindfulness grows further, we see more clearly that it is not actually running but arising and falling at each place, such as the eyes, the ears or in thinking. When the continuity is broken like this, we can say that we are truly at the level of practicing Vipassana. If there is not yet discontinuity, then it isn't genuine Vipassana.

We have to keep practicing to see the continuity break. When this insight into the truth first happens it really can shake up our world. Some people become frightened. Some people become bored. Others feel empty, like their essence is missing, and can't find their footing; they can't find anything solid to rely on anymore. Some people become so bored, they lose passion for everything in the world. They are disinterested in both happiness and unhappiness. They lose their passion for everything and everyone, including their spouse. This dispassion, however, is not an impurity of mind. It is a natural step in the process of enlightenment. The mind is bored or dispassionate because it has mindfulness and wisdom that sees everything is nonsensical and insubstantial. It becomes equally bored of pleasure and pain, equally bored of good and bad, equally bored with things coarse and things subtle, and equally bored of internal experiences and external experiences. At this stage it is dispassionate to absolutely everything. The mind stops pursuing anything. But some people get very frightened indeed. When they practice to the point where they see what they thought was themselves disappear, some people become absolutely terrified.

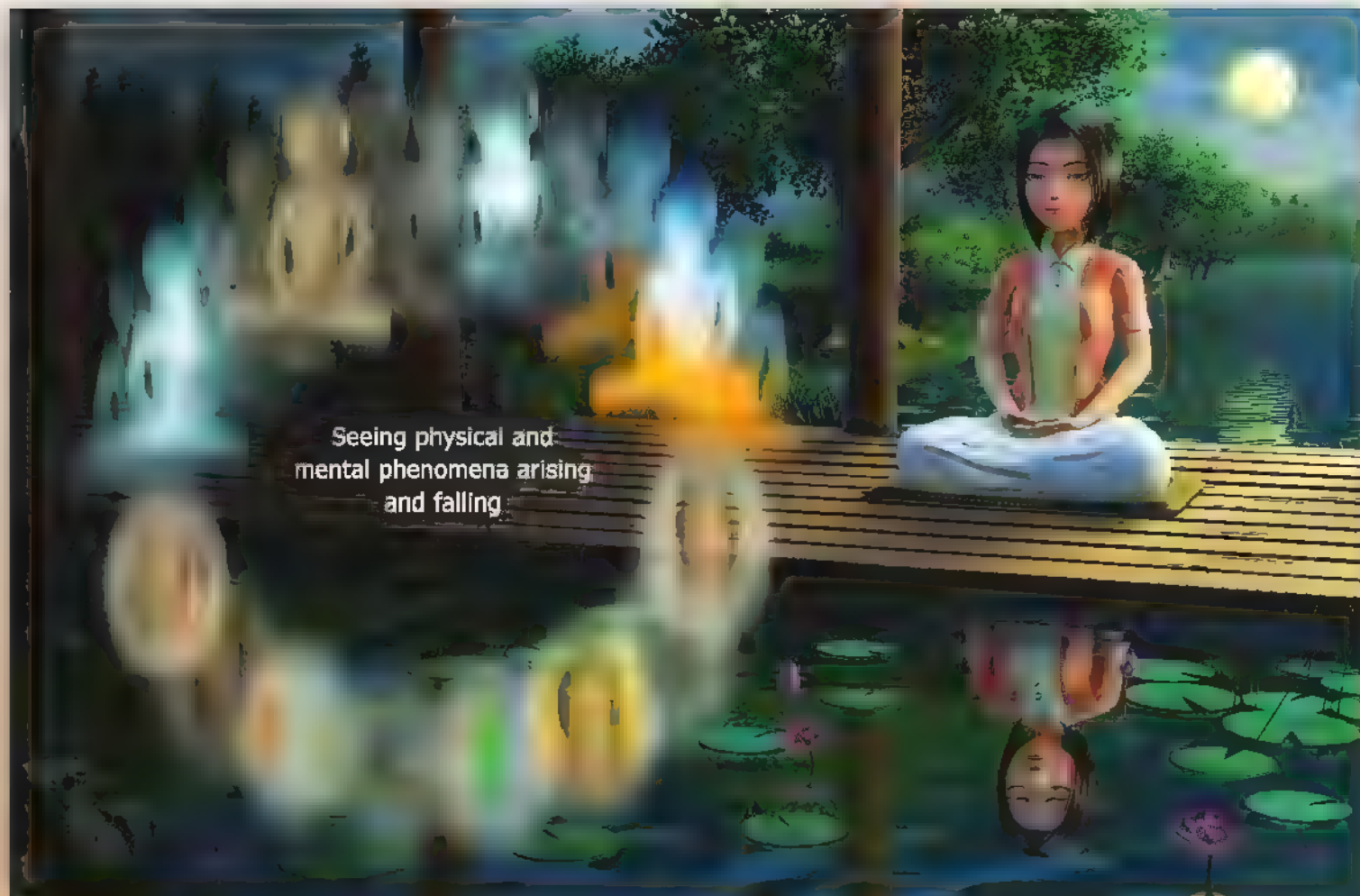


When we can see the arising and falling of the mind, we are truly experiencing Vipassana.

If this fear happens we just treat it as we would anger, greed or the wandering mind – we have the mindfulness that sees it and it drops away. It is equivalent to all the other states that can arise in the sense that it is just another thing that comes, mindfulness can recognize it and it falls away. When mindfulness sees it and it drops off, the mind becomes the stable observer. We keep seeing and understanding the truth more and more. The mind will see that happiness and unhappiness are temporary states; anger, greed and the wandering mind are all temporary states; a restless, upset, pleased or remorseful mind are all temporary states. Everything is temporary. Whatever arises, also falls.

When the mind finally accepts the truth that anything that arises is just a temporary phenomenon, the mind will surrender. It will no longer struggle in pursuit of satisfaction or enjoyment in any object. It will no longer struggle to push away or avoid any object that can bring displeasure. The mind will become genuinely indifferent to what arises. This indifference arises from wisdom, not from any kind of suppression or tranquility training. This is a powerful kind of indifference or neutrality, that can be better defined as an equanimity to all formations.

At this point, pleasure and pain are equivalent states. So are heaven and hell. There is no struggle here as the mind is completely awake and stable. It knows and sees everything that arises and falls with no movement towards or away from anything. All states are seen as equivalent. Pleasure or happiness when it arises is merely known or seen. Pain or suffering when it arises is merely known or seen. Anything that arises also falls away and so there is no struggle towards or away from any state. There will be no struggle and no forming of any stories or fictions. The mind will gradually slow its forming of fictions until it suddenly halts to a stop.



Seeing physical and
mental phenomena arising
and falling

The wisdom that sees the arising and falling of mental and physical phenomena renders the mind dispassionate towards things. The mind stops struggling to keep or push away any state of body or mind.

When the mind stops, it will enter a deep level of concentration automatically. There will be no more thinking at all. The mind will see the arising and falling of phenomena for just two or three moments. The phenomena will purely be seen and not interpreted as the mind has stopped forming any thought, emotion or distraction at all. Then the mind will let go of all phenomena and turn back towards pure consciousness, boundless and free of all defilements and impurities that previously weighed it down. In this pure consciousness, impurities will be permanently washed away.

This all happens in one moment, called the Noble Path. For the next two or three moments, the mind is unbounded by the world and experiences Nirvana. This transcendent experience is the fruition of the Noble Path.



When there is no more struggle and no more attachment to any state,
the mind will be free from even the subtlest of impurities.

At this point, the mind will come out of the deep concentration and return to the regular world. Once it has, it will review what has just occurred. It will know which impurities have vanished and which still remain. It will know if there still is work to be done. If final enlightenment has taken place, there will be no defilements or impurities remaining in the mind. The experience of Nirvana is whole and complete.

Nirvana is here and now and has never gone anywhere. It is right in front of our eyes, but we cannot see it as we are blinded by impurities, misperceptions, by ignorance. When we walk the path of wisdom and practice Vipassana to the fullest we receive the greatest gift available to any being. Nirvana is complete liberation, weightless and released from any desire, with no more attachment, no more struggle, and never again deluded. The mind is untouchable: nothing can ever come in, take over the mind and make it suffer ever again.



The ultimate goal in our Dhamma practice is the bliss of Nirvana.



Chapter Four: Dhamma In Dally Life

Once we understand the proper principles of Dhamma, it is time to put the teachings to practice in our daily lives. Let's get rid of the image that many of us have in our heads, that a good Vipassana or Dhamma practitioner sits cross-legged with the eyes and ears closed. The most important part of the practice is mindfulness throughout our regular activities in daily life. Whenever an impurity arises in the mind, we know that it has right then and there, irrespective of what else we may be doing at the time. That is called Dhamma practice. When the body makes a movement and we know it, that is Dhamma practice. When the mind forms a thought or an emotion and we know it has just done so, then we practiced the Dhamma for that moment.

Now when we are at work, we should be focused on our duties at hand. However, if we have a few minutes here and there with nothing to do, we can immediately start to watch the body and the mind. Or while we work, if stress enters the mind, we can know that stress has arisen. That is Dhamma practice right then and there. Perhaps we are hurrying to complete a project and then someone calls and is wasting our time. Our mind feels angry. We then can practice mindfulness and know that anger has arisen. Then we keep working away until we look at the clock and it is lunch time.

Satisfaction arises and we become aware and see that it has. This is what a true Dhamma practitioner does.

Next we go down for lunch and walk along and watch the body walking. The mind is the observer and the body is being observed. What to eat? There are so many great choices today! We must be very hungry as everything looks wonderful. The mind is indecisive. We know that it is. On some days, nothing at all looks appetizing and the mind feels annoyed, "This cafeteria sucks! Can't they be more original?" If we don't have mindfulness, the hungrier we are, the more we complain!



Practicing to know what the body and mind are doing
and feeling when we are involved in regular activities this is what is meant by practicing the Dhamma in daily life



Sometimes we have to use the washroom really badly! We run to the washroom and see that all the stalls are full. We really start to worry. Now it is an emergency and our belly is in serious pain. We then run to the washroom on another floor and see it is full too, and people are waiting in line. The mind is in a panic. We come to know that this is so. If we can have the mindfulness that sees the anxiety, then our stomach may be in pain, but our mind will not be. This is Dhamma practice.

We watch our mind and see what happens moment to moment.

Soon, we will see that our mind is always in flux: one moment it is happy and the next it is unhappy, and then next it is neutral. One moment the mind is wholesome and joyfully practicing the Dhamma, and the next moment it is struggling, lost in a painful story. Can we see this? The mind in a flash changes from greedy to angry and then off in thought.



When we have the mindfulness that sees what arises in our heart and sees what the body is doing, and when the mind is the stable observer, we won't fabricate a false reality and we will see the true Three Characteristics of body and mind.



We are not practicing to be superhuman. We are just to be ordinary people like we are now. We keep practicing in daily life to see what an ordinary human body and mind are like, what their true characteristics are. When we understand their true characteristics, we won't be upset when this or that happens to the body and mind. Getting old is normal, getting sick is normal, and dying is normal. Not getting what we want is normal. Getting what we don't want is normal. Dreams coming true, dreams shattered – are all normal and natural experiences. We cannot depend on this body and this mind. They cannot bring us any comfort or happiness we can truly rely on.

Accepting this, whatever happens in our life will appear as if it is happening to someone else and not us.

If there is no us, then who is it that acts? It is the body and mind, the aggregates that act all on their own. And it is the aggregates that receive the results of actions too. There is no person to experience the results of our actions; there are only aggregates of body and mind that do. We break free from the cycle of karma, one could say. There is tremendous relief and incomparable happiness when we are no longer living in the delusion that there is a self.

With full wisdom, it is the aggregates – and not us – that move about functionally, doing this and that. And if there are just aggregates and the idea of a “me” is just a delusion, then who suffers? The body and mind may suffer, but we certainly don’t.

We become free from suffering because we have a correct understanding of the way things are. We have enlightened wisdom.

The cycle of birth and death is a very long and painful one. It is a very rare occurrence that a being will have the chance to listen to and become interested in the Dhamma that liberates us from this cycle of suffering once and for all. Let’s not spend our time mindlessly and without meaning. Let’s gradually bring awareness to our body and our mind, and practice The Buddhist Way to Peace of Mind.



May the Buddha's last words inspire and motivate us to practice the Dhamma and release our minds from the suffering and delusion that plague them: "It is normal and natural for all creations, whether physical or mental, to diminish and die. [For ourselves and for the good of many] we must all strive with diligence in our practice."





Mana is a business man striving for worldly happiness. He is consumed with finding romantic and financial successes. He is presently very upset that he can't attract his dream girl.

Piti is a freelance writer who is interested in incorporating the Buddha's teachings into his life to make it a happier one.

Jitra is Piti's girlfriend. She is studying the different techniques of formal meditation.



Nalin is a modern young woman. She hopes for future success in her chosen profession. Right now she is very stressed and has decided to learn Vipassana on the advice of a concerned friend.

Pavadee is an elementary school teacher. She has been a faithful and practicing Buddhist ever since she was a child. She has been dedicated to developing Vipassana for a long time and she is set on attaining enlightenment one day.

This monk is a venerable teacher of Vipassana practice.

The Buddhist Way to Peace of Mind

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Proofreader (English):	Salima Pirani
Original Book Designer:	Tomogram Studios Co.,Ltd.
Delegator:	Mr.Panusak Salpanich
Project Funding:	Progress Technology Consultants Co.,Ltd.







Becoming a separate and unbiased observer,
we come to see the body and mind as they really are.
This is the essence of Vipassana meditation.